WILSHIRE'S

"LET THE NATION OWN THE TRUSTS"

GAYLORD WILSHIRE
-Editor-

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The Saturday Evening Post

WILSHIRE'S has never pursued the narrow, petty policy of ignoring good merely because the good does not emanate from an accredited Socialist source.

We have always held that when Socialist ideas appear in the ordinary capitalist paper, primarily published to make money, that it's much more significant and instructive than when we see the same ideas in a paper professedly Socialist. It shows that the people are becoming educated enough to demand the truth.

It shows that it pays to tell the truth, and once an American editor is sure of making more money by telling the truth than by suppressing it, we may be sure that the era of truthful papers is at hand.

I would venture to say that the particular paper that is just now telling the truth the most fearlessly and the most successfully is the *Saturday Evening Post* of Philadelphia, and it has nearly two million circulation weekly and is still growing. It's the largest circulation in the world.

A few years ago the *Post* largely confined itself to articles and stories adapted to young men who wished to "get rich quick." Its heroes were men who had turned the track and had become millionaires.

The *Post* published few, if any, really serious articles, and it never thought of attacking the powers that be.

But millionaires are no longer popular heroes, and to-day there is no paper as fearless in its exposures and attacks on millionaires as the *Post*. There is also no paper that is so completely and obviously in the control of its owners as is the *Post*. Perhaps this may explain its courage.

It's better fun and much easier to tell the truth and be virtuous, journalistically virtuous, than it is to kow-tow to your advertisers and lie. If you wish to know how true this is read the "Fortunes of the Sun," a story which ran in the *Post* for three issues, beginning with the 2d of last month.

It's the story of three bright, experienced young men who tried to run a daily paper and tell the truth. They had a paper free from debt and $60,000 cash in bank.

They had more experience and less of that $60,000 in a remarkably short time. If you read this article you will not be so astonished the next time you notice that your own daily paper fails to print all the news.

However, I did not start out to tell how difficult it is for an editor to tell the truth and to make his salt at the same time; but to point out the *Post* as a paper which just now seems the only American paper that is performing this modern miracle.

Every single one of the radical Monthly Magazines seems to be in rather low water financially, and there is hardly a single one but seems to have fallen into the control of Morgan.

In the last year or so *Everybody's*, the *American, Hampton's, the Metropolitan,* all have undergone stock manipulations which have given cause for many forebodings as to their continued editorial independence. They were not making the money they expected to make and they were all compelled to seek aid from outsiders.

The *Post,* on the other hand, is not only owned by a rich man, Curtis, who is the owner also of the *Ladies' Home Journal,* an immensely valuable paper; but, on its own account, the *Post* is obviously a huge financial success. It certainly can afford to be independent, and, for the time being, it is exercising its privilege.

Here is an excerpt from an article by Gifford Pinchot which it recently printed, which will show what I mean:

> What shall we do with the coal in Alaska? Use it, of course.
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> There is more good coal in Alaska than there ever was in Pennsylvania.
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> * * * * * * *
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> One of the principal reasons why the great corporations have been able to control our politics as well as our business is that the public has had no legal right to be informed of their affairs. Any company that mines the people's coal upon the people's land may fairly be required to keep the people fully informed of what it does. The day is well-nigh over when the business man who supplies a necessity of life, like coal or oil, can be considered to have no public function or responsibility. How such a man conducts his business is of immediate interest and intimate concern to all the people who use what he supplies. So, under a coal-land lease in Alaska, the people may fairly require that what is being done upon their property by their agent—for that is what the lessee really is—shall be laid fully before them.
>
> One thing remains, and that the most vital of all. The consumer must be protected against extortion. To this end, it is by no means enough to provide Government regulation of the price at which the lessee shall sell his coal. It is a middleman, not the consumer, who will buy from the lessee—a middleman often three or four times removed from the man who will ultimately burn the coal. Therefore the price to be charged to the ultimate consumer must be kept under Government control. For the time being, no agency exists so well adapted as the Interstate Commerce Commission to perform this difficult but practicable and most important task.

A MONOPOLY BY THE PEOPLE.

A bill has recently been introduced in the House by Mr. Robinson, of Arkansas, and in the Senate by Mr. Works, of California, which follows the lines advocated in this article. This bill has behind it the strong support of the National Conservation Association and, at the coming session of Congress, there is hope that it will pass. It proposes to meet the difficult problem of regulating the price to the consumer by adopting the course already followed with success by Kansas. It provides that, in determining a maximum beyond which the price to the consumer shall not rise, the Interstate Com-

merce Commission shall first establish a reasonable price at the mouth of the mine, and then add the cost for transportation—which it may regulate—and for handling, plus a reasonable profit—thus determining the highest price the consumer ought to pay. Without some such device, the regulation of the business in Alaska coal in the public interest must fail of its principal purpose. The man who needs protection most is the man who actually burns the coal. There is much question as to whether the regulation of railroad rates by the Interstate Commerce Commission or by the Interior Department, under the present law, will prevent monopoly in its practical results. If it does, well; if not, then *we must come to Government construction or ownership of railroads in Alaska,* in favor of which the last year has seen a most significant growth of public sentiment.

The opening of the coalfields under Government regulation is but a start in the great work for Alaska which the Congress of the United States has yet to do. Alaska is the storehouse of the nation. Most of its timberlands are already fairly protected against destruction, while remaining open to use, for they have been included in national forests; but the fisheries, the copper, the gold, the power, the land, are other resources whose value to this country it is impossible to compute.

No comprehensive plan for the development of Alaska resources ought to be adopted—and I believe that none can be put into effect—which fails to provide for equality of opportunity in the use of them under Government supervision and control. If conditions are such in Alaska that development without monopoly is impossible, then let us, the people of the United States, become our own monopolists and hold the monopolies in our own hands. As a nation, we can afford to assume the risks of development without taking from the consumer the huge profit of the promoter who succeeds, or saddling the public with the huge losses which are often shifted upon it by the promoter who fails. If conditions make for monopoly in Alaska let it be a monopoly of which the people are the owners, not the tollpayers—the beneficiaries, and not the victims.

Is it not most significant when a paper like the *Post* comes out for the Nationalization of Railways and Coal Mines in Alaska? Was it fear of nationalization that made Taft so anxious to give the Guggenheim's railway an entry into Alaska that he wrote that secret Controller Bay order?

It is also significant of the growth of the trend of popular thought for Government ownership in Alaska that La Follette is out strongly for it.

Furthermore, the *Post* has no use for Taft's veto of the Arizona Statehood Bill. It says:

A VETO FOR ARIZONA.

A really big question is involved in Arizona statehood; but with that question the recall of judges has nothing whatever to do. The real question is that of the right of the people of Arizona to govern themselves within the limits of the Federal Constitution. A veto of the Arizona statehood bill is a flat denial of right.

The Arizona Constitution is progressive. It provides for initiative and referendum; for the recall of legislative and executive officers who have betrayed the trust reposed in them; and it may easily be amended by the people in any particular at any time. All this, naturally, is highly offensive to the reactionary mind that turns with admiration to the exceedingly conservative and almost unamendable Constitution of New Mexico. But all of these features are found in the constitutions of other states, and the right of the people of a state to frame such government as they choose—provided it is not in conflict with the Federal Constitution—is so clear that conservatism would not have ventured to deny statehood to Arizona upon any of those counts. No one could seriously argue that recall for judges, any more than recall for governors, violates the Federal Constitution; but that further provision in the Arizona Constitution afforded conservatism a means of expressing its abhorrence of the spirit of the whole document.

Being progressive is Arizona's sin.

What papers, we ask, except WILSHIRE'S and the Socialist press, which, of course, don't count, were in favor of the initiative and referendum? In fact there are very few papers even yet in favor of direct legislation, and none for the recall. That the *Post* is not only in favor of the recall of judges, but goes out of its way to slap the President on the question, makes us sit up and take notice that the world do move after all.

Is Philadelphia Really Slow?

WE have alluded to the progressiveness of the Philadelphia *Saturday Evening Post* in another column. We do not wish to make this edition all *Post,* but at the same time the two following *Post* editorials are so much to the point in carrying out our contention that the American people are getting ready to listen to socialistic arguments that we cannot refrain from reproducing them:

THE SEVEN-DAY STEEL WEEK.

At the steel mills some men work eighty-four hours a week—twelve hours for every day including Sunday—and they have the "long shift" involving twenty-four hours of continuous labor. This, of course, is beastly, as steel men themselves frankly admit. But it is obvious that if you are going to compete you must get as much out of your labor as your competitor does. If he grinds ninety-nine out of his labor and you grind only eighty-nine out of yours he will beat you. Eighty-four hours a week is a logical fruit of unrestricted competition.

The Government has grave doubts about the Iron and Steel Institute and the "Gary dinners," suspecting them of being unlawful combinations in restraint of competition. Last October, however, the Institute appointed a committee to work out a plan by which all steel mills might agree to abolish the seven-day week and the long shift. The task is complicated, but has doubtless been rendered somewhat easier by fraternal discussion among the steel men at "Gary dinners." The committee has finally submitted a report, and abolition of the outrageous seven-day week may reasonably be expected. To abolish it by law would be difficult, requiring united action by many states. If the steel industry were not already highly organized, with a pretty good understanding among all the important producers, united action to abolish an abuse of labor would be impossible.

When an industry is highly organized—which means it is pretty much a trust—all the social problems attending it are right under your thumb where you can get action on them.

MAKING TRANSPORTATION DEAR.

The first parcels-post difficulty that we recall occurred at the close of the fifteenth century. Arabs controlled the overland routes from India to the Mediterranean and so monopolized the spice trade, which they worked in partnership with the Venetians. Directly after Vasco da Gama reached India by sea, however, Portugal sent thither a fleet of trading ships. In spite of bitterest opposition on the part of the monopolistic Arabs the ships succeeded in securing cargoes of spices and other Oriental wares which they brought to Europe. The result was a panic in Venice, the price of spices there falling fifty per cent. That the Arabs had made thrifty use of their monopoly is indicated by the fact that, in spite of this fall in prices, the Portuguese are said to have sold their spices at a profit of six hundred per cent. Probably the Arabs argued, like our express companies, that they were really benevolent persons and engaged in trade mostly for their health.

The dearness of transportation at that time was a matter of small importance, for commerce was chiefly confined to articles of luxury. Only barons could buy spices anyway. Nowadays, when transportation enters into the cost of the necessaries of life, there seems decidedly less excuse for tolerating a monopolistic toll upon it.

The Japanese Government in Formosa expends some five million dollars annually in establishing new enterprises, among which are irrigation works, tobacco factories, water works, harbor works, government buildings, railroads, forestry and control of the aboriginal population.

A recent, and probably the most accurate, census of the Chinese Empire places the population at 329,000,000, of which China proper is credited with 304,000,000.

Manchester, England, this year shows the highest profit and the lowest rate on municipally supplied gas, the former being $700,000 net, and the latter 55 cents per 1,000 cubic feet, a rate that will be reduced to 49 cents during the coming fiscal year.

A Little Trust Tragedy

THERE used to be an old saying that he "who would by his business rise, must either bust or advertise." In the good old days of competition, when trade opportunities were fairly open to all, the epigram had a tolerably far application. In these days of trusts and combines, however, the alternative of "advertise or bust' is not even afforded. The small retailer in competition with the trust generally discovers that advertising, even on a most liberal scale, is not a certain preventive by any means against "busting."

This discovery has been made recently by Mr. Joseph Liebmann, a New York tobacco retailer, at 125th Street and Seventh Avenue, who for several years conducted business in opposition to the local trust stores which hedged him in on every side. Mr. Liebmann advertised the fact liberally in the neighborhood that he was fighting the Tobacco Trust to a finish. He periodically littered the locality with handbills detailing his struggles and the persecution which the trust was subjecting him to, and his store windows were usually covered with printed matter of the same description, newspaper clippings and grotesque pen and ink cartoons satirizing his rivals and their products. His appeal for public assistance and sympathy was for years constantly before the Harlem public.

However, despite his gallant fight, Mr. Liebmann is apparently ready to throw up the sponge. He now declares that the trust has run him out of business, that it has already run him out of two stores because he refused to sell out to it. Under cover of a concern known as the United Merchants' Realty and Improvement Company, which Mr. Liebmann declares to have been formed by the trust for the special purpose of furthering its interests locally, it succeeded in forcing him out by inducing the landlord from whom he rented to raise the rent to a prohibitive figure. He now asks $50,000 damages.

For almost as long as he has been fighting the trust the Socialists of the vicinity have been conducting very large meetings on the corner adjoining his store, and at these meetings the trust question has been discussed very many times, and often with Mr. Liebmann's case as a local example, most of the speakers predicting a losing fight for him. And now to all appearances their predictions are about to be fulfilled.

It is not known that Mr. Liebmann ever attended any of these meetings or ever heard any discussion of the trust question from a Socialist viewpoint, or was in any way interested in it. Of course, the speakers couldn't do much of anything to help him in his fight, and it is, to be sure, a poor sort of consolation to tell a man that he is ultimately going to be licked, anyhow, no matter how hard he may fight. But no Socialist feels any particular satisfaction in the financial undoing of any individual small capitalist just because he predicted it, any more than an astronomer congratulates himself because he has been correct in announcing the coming of an eclipse.

Mr. Liebmann has fought his fight and has apparently lost out, for it is not very probable that he will succeed in making the trust pay damages that may set him up in business again. The trust doesn't calculate on reimbursing the competitors it has eliminated. If such was the case there wouldn't be any possible use in competing, and if it were possible for Mr. Liebmann to bust the trust he would feel outraged if called upon to pay damages therefor. However, the Tobacco Trust is considerably more powerful than the law and knows a thousand ways to dodge it. If Mr. Liebmann gets "judgment" he may content himself, as it is about all he will get in the most favorable view of the case. To collect is another matter entirely, and it's a mighty big job for a very small man.

Still, the doors of opportunity are not altogether closed. It is quite possible that Mr. Liebmann, like many hundreds of other retail tobacco dealers, may come to an understanding with the trust, whereby he can carry on business apparently the same as before, with the trust supplying him with stock and dictating the price it shall be sold at. The trust has some bowels of compassion after all, and it will even permit its agents to masquerade as independent dealers, if it gets the most of the profits. Thus the appearance of competition is kept up and the general public not much the wiser. In fact, Mr. Liebmann, in such case, might even continue his semblance of war on the trust as before, to inspire confidence among former patrons, and as a business attraction. For the trust is infinite in resources—cash and other kinds—and can even turn a war against itself into a profitable scheme. With such an arrangement Mr. Liebmann might not only apparently continue in business, but might even go so far as to advertise that he had definitely slain the octopus and trumpet forth his victory to all and sundry.

But if Mr. Liebmann is too conscientious to be satisfied with a make-believe competition, and too independent to become an agent of the trust, we see no other way for him to preserve his "individuality" than to call for a new deal; to admit that the trust has skinned him to a finish at the competitive game, and that he doesn't want to play that game any more, because it is an impossible one for him, and that he now wants to play at the game of national ownership for the trust with his vote as one of the trump cards. In short, the game that the Socialist speakers on his corner have for years been urging their audiences to demand with their ballots. The trust is good game, too, fat, luscious and juicy; it has been feeding on Mr. Liebmann and his ilk for many years and has drained them to add to its own substance and is in prime condition for the national table.

If Mr. Liebmann does not care for that program, there are still two alternatives open to him. He may sit down and wait for the trust to dissolve—as per recent order—and then resume business again, or if the waiting is too tiresome, he can lie down and take what is coming to him, and that, whatever else it may be, will not take the form of cash damages from the trust.

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The General Strike

A VERY interesting editorial upon the General Strike appears in Blatchford's *Clarion*, a socialist weekly of 60,000 circulation, the largest in England.

The *Clarion* is not only very strongly impressed with the possibilities of the general strike, but it declares that the workers generally are also coming to look upon the strike rather than the ballot as the weapon which may prove the more effective.

There is no doubt but that the failure of the Socialist parliamentary successes in the various countries to accomplish as much as was hoped for accounts for much of this revival of the popular regard for the strike.

With the universal military service established some years past in the continental countries, a revolution by force became obviously impossible, and so naturally the radicals turned to politics as their next best weapon, the general strike then being hardly thought of.

However, politics not having proved so very successful, and labor leaders like Briand and Millerand in France, Ferri in Italy, not to mention Burns in England, losing their Socialism, many of the best of the Socialists have now become disgusted with parliamentary action.

And now comes the English sailors winning a fight against tremendous odds, getting recognition of their union and an increase of wages, then the dockers winning their strike, and finally the railway men tieing up all Britain forcing the Government to intervene and agree that the companies should be given the right to increase their fares and use the increase to pay higher wages, all these remarkable successes naturally have placed the strike upon a pedestal from which it will not be speedily dislodged.

The recent strikes in England have done more in one month to raise wages than parliamentary action has done in ten years.

The strike has, however, been the weapon of despair rather than hope. The cost of living has so increased that it was practically a matter of strike or starve. If wages should be raised permanently a peg or two, it is quite a question whether most of the workers would not be content to rest on their oars for an indefinite period.

In this the political Socialists possibly differ from the syndicalists, for no amount of concession short of the full product of labor to the voting workers will ever satisfy the former, while it is not so certain that if a decent living wage were granted to the striking workers that the syndicalist leaders would find their army melt away like snow in June.

In America, paradoxically enough, the very defects of our political system have so far tended to attract the attention of revolutionary Socialists more to politics than to the general strike. It is practically impossible for Americans to gain very much by politics in the way of social legislation.

The Supreme Court finds most progressive laws unconstitutional. Besides the National Government has little or nothing to do with local legislation, and so far the Socialists have paid more attention to national politics than to State politics. But no constitution can prevent the workers losing the fruits of a successful strike.

It has been recognized from the start that politics with us are more a means of Socialist propaganda than for obtaining legislation. Therefore, the failure of Socialist success to result in any immediate material gain has been so fully discounted that there has been no disappointment.

However, there can be no doubt but that the inability to do very much politically in this country, owing to constitutional restrictions, taken together with the example of the success of the English strikes, will turn the attention of the workers to the great utility of the strike as a most useful weapon for social improvement, and one that has hitherto been too much neglected.

The High-Price Riots in France

THE French certainly are thoroughgoing in their methods. First they organize as Syndicalists to have a General Strike against low wages and proceed, meanwhile, to man-handle all tradesmen who do not make a general reduction in current prices.

However, while the first part of their program may have a qualified success, it is difficult to see how their attempt to make tradesmen sell at lower prices can be successful.

Tradesmen, as a rule, make a very small profit and if their prices become higher it is merely because their costs have become higher. If a tradesman is to be beaten up and his shop looted whenever his prices are thought to be too high, then it's but natural that he will refuse to open up shop again until he is guaranteed protection. Meanwhile the food rioters can't get food at any price.

However, the rise of the French populace against high prices has a deep significance, even though the methods may be illogical. It is significant of the growing determination of the workers of the world, wherever they may be, to get a fuller share of the product of their labor than they have been hitherto getting.

This movement is bound, naturally, to take the line of the least resistance, or what is apparently that line.

Those workers who strike for higher wages think that line of action seems the easiest and most direct method.

The price of food has risen abnormally in France during the last year or so; this is part of the general movement of higher prices owing to decreased cost of production of gold, and partly owing to the shortage of milk and vegetables, owing to the unprecedented drought.

It is difficult to see any outcome to the French food riots other than the evidence that will be driven home to the general public that some very radical change must be made if a revolution in our present system of production is to be averted.

Certainly, if France, where the wealth per capita is not only greater than in any other country, but where wealth is more equitably distributed, cannot get along without food rioting, then the outlook for America is not bright.

We look for very high prices of food in this country this winter and there ought to be something doing in the way of a revolt of labor here.

Manchuria is being rapidly settled by Japanese, the latest census showing over 60,000 Japanese settlers in Southern Manchuria alone. Of these over 27,000 are living in the city of Dalny, which was constructed by the Russian Government as the principal seaport of the country and fell into the hands of the Japanese during the war.

The Commission Plan of City Government

THAT the universal adoption of the Commission Plan of government for our cities will work a revolution in the attitude of the public mind to politics in general seems to me inevitable.

The American city is notoriously the most corrupt politically in the world, and the corruption is not due to the ineptitude of the people for self-government, but merely to the fact that hitherto we have had an irresponsible form of government.

Grafting was going on and we knew it, and we often knew who was responsible, but more often we did not.

In any event we could do nothing. We were not sure whether it was the council or the Mayor or the elected officials who did the grafting, and even if we were certain we could do nothing. We felt so helpless that we practically gave up the job and let our cities fall into the hands of the lowest and most unprincipled men in town.

However, the Commission plan, as originated in Galveston and Des Moines, by putting all power into the hands of five men, has fixed responsibility. And the addition of the recall enables us to fire any one or all of these men whenever we wish. We can detect the grafter and, better still, when detected we can fire him. That's a tremendous advance on anything we had ever before in our political system.

Judson C. Welliver, in *Munsey's* for August, gives a most interesting account of the workings of the new plan from which I cull the following points:

We Americans are a sanguine lot. We are proud of our own town, even when it has cobblestones where asphalt ought to be, or asphalt at three dollars the yard which ought to have been laid for half the price.

Goodness knows, we have been told often enough that the "genius of our institutions" hasn't much lent itself to the development of ideal municipal conditions. We're sorry about that, of course; but not having seen any model cities, we insist on being as pleased as possible with what we have. At least we can brag about the bigness and rapid growth of our cities, and it serves the purpose, at least till some statistical fiend comes along and insists that they are not growing faster than some of the European ones.

Mere bigness, of course, isn't very satisfying, when you think of it. Why should our town be pleased that it has twenty-nine per cent. more human beings condemned to breathe miasmatic air and drink typhoid germs than it numbered ten years ago? Yet we have all heard the fulminations of the Chicago man who plumes himself on the superlative wide-openness of his city; and I once saw a Bostonian peel his coat for a fight when he was earnestly assured that New Orleans had a worse smell in summer than the waterfront of the Hub!

It's a good thing, though, that everybody persists in being proud of his town. If we can only set up a better standard by which to measure; if we could get as much newspaper space for the most honest alderman as for the biggest boodler; if a public work erected at small cost commanded as much interest as one produced at preposterously high cost; if towns would brag about how well their working people were housed, instead of how many they had—then we should be on the road to better municipal things, and the ancient reproach of bad city government in America would close.

The new standard, in fact, has already been established. The movement for better city government is one of the most important, and in its implications one of the most far-reaching, now going on.

It is ridding us of the city boss, who has intimate relationship to State and national boss-ships. It is making our cities cleaner, better, more healthy both morally and physically. It is nailing tins over a vast lot of rat-holes into which we have poured our city revenues. It is teaching the people the value of public-service franchises, the need to protect them, and the possibility of securing good public service at reasonable prices. It is reducing the cost of living to the denizens of the towns, and giving better living.

All this betterment is being wrought in various ways in different cities; but the system of city government by commission, with its direct responsibility to the people, its close concentration of authority, and its simplification of procedure, is the particular phase which is here to be considerered. It marks a departure from ancient superstitions about the tripartite division of government, and has done much toward disproving some of those wise old saws which, having fallen too often upon nails, have lost the edge of their applicability to present conditions. In its beginnings, men of academic mind viewed it askance because it sought to amalgamate legislative and executive authority. Horrific thought!—except that the plan has worked well.

The commission plan of government proposes to merge the legislative functions, once exercised by the city council of one or two chambers, and the executive powers, formerly held by the mayor; to repose both in a small commission, commonly of five members; to have this commission elected by the people of the entire city, rather than by wards, as formerly; to make the commissioners subject to recall by the people at any time; to give the people a right to veto the commission's legislation through the referendum, and to supplement it through the initiative.

In its best development, the plan takes all party politics out of municipal government. No party name, emblem, or slogan can be attached to any man's candidacy. The office-seeker must run as a citizen, not as a partisan, standing on his own policies, not on a platform made by a convention that can never hold him to accountability.

It was practically as a war measure that commission government orginated in Galveston. The disaster of 1900, which almost destroyed the Texas city, made extreme methods justifiable. In that day of utter chaos, three men, without warrant or color of law, took charge of things, established military rule, and set about restoring order. They ruled by the same right as stone-age chieftains—the right of that strength which equipped them to dominate their fellows and their situation. Usurpers they were, indeed, for they were legislature and executive, judge, jury, and executioner; but they made it possible to save Galveston.

In those days of chaos, at Galveston, the Texas legislature passed a law under which the Governor named a majority of the stricken city's commissioners. The courts held this to be an infringement of local self-government, and then all the commissioners were made elective. The wards were abolished, and the commissioners chosen from the entire city.

For seven years the plan worked well in Galveston, though it was not yet perfected. In that period only one other city, Houston, adopted it. Then some Iowa people with interests in Texas had their attention drawn to it. Des Moines needed reform. For its size, it was perhaps as sad an example of the corrupt and machine-ridden town as could be found in the country.

At this period the democratic features of initative, referendum and recall had not been engrafted on the commission plan. Los Angeles had these features, but did not have the commission. There was sincere and well-grounded protest against the new plan without these checks, because it was liable to develop into an autocracy. Five men vested with power to levy and expend taxes, to make appointments for all offices, and to pass all ordinances, could easily make themselves a very sanhedrim of bossism.

Before the reformers had bethought them of tempering the commission's boss-ship with the democratic instru-

ments of direct popular control, the Galveston plan was submitted to the Iowa Legislature and rejected. Then came the suggestion of combining the Galveston commission with the Los Angeles provisions for direct legislation and recall. This answered much of the objection. But there was still a weakness which some people considered vital. The city government might yet fall into the hands of politicians, be connected with Congressional and State machines, and become a menace.

Governor Cummins insisted that all party politics ought to be completely eliminated, and it was he who invented the next proposal—that of the double, non-partisan election. This was the finishing touch. It was adopted, and the legislature passed an enabling act, permitting Des Moines, by popular vote, to adopt the new system if it chose.

MAIN FEATURES OF THE PLAN.

Here are the essentials of the plan which Des Moines and Cedar Rapids both adopted, and simultaneously set in operation on April 6, 1908:

The old division of the city into wards, each choosing an alderman, was wiped out.

Political conventions and party names were abolished so far as concerns city affairs.

The ancient system of having a long "city ticket" of mayor, engineer, treasurer, auditor, and so forth, elected each alternate year, by the vote of the entire city, and of having an alderman elected from each ward, was ended.

Under the new plan, nobody was elected but five commissioners. One of these was called mayor, and presided over the commission; but he had only the same vote as any other commissioner, and no veto.

Any citizen could be a candidate for mayor or commissioner by securing the petition of twenty-five citizens. This required that his name be placed on the ticket at the first or primary election. Names were arranged alphabetically on the ticket; no party name or emblem was allowed.

The eight candidates for commissioner, and the two for mayor, having the highest votes in the primary election, then made up the ticket for the final election. This was again arranged alphabetically and without political designation.

At the final polling, the one candidate for mayor, and the four for commissioners, receiving the largest votes, were declared elected.

The commission thus elected chose by ballot all other officers and employees, practically all from civil-service merit lists. The city's business was divided into five administrative departments, each headed by a commissioner, thus:

ıblic affairs, headed by the mayor.

ɔunts and finance.

Public safety.

Streets and public works.

Parks and public property.

Each commissioner had general supervision in his department, running it just as if he were executive head of a department of a great business. The five, sitting as a commission, made policies, passed ordinances, prepared the budget, levied taxes, and generally bossed the town.

They could not, however, give away any public franchise. They could frame and recommend a grant, which must be submitted to the voters at a special election, and get a majority vote, to become effective.

Such is the referendum as to franchises. As to legislation, the plan provides that if the council passes objectionable legislation, twenty-five per cent. of the voters, by petition, may require that its operation shall be suspended, and that an election shall be called to pass on it. Likewise, if the council refuses to pass any desired legislation, then a like petition can command the commission to submit this legislation to a special election. In either case, the legislation stands or falls as the majority of the people vote.

Similarly as to the recall. If the people get a "grouch" against a commissioner, a like petition requires the commission to call an election to fill his place. He is a candidate, if he so desires; other nominations are made as already described; and in the election the man with the majority of votes wins.

By this plan party politics is eliminated. The city alministration cannot be subordinated to and used by any political organization. Appointments are made on the basis of merit, during good behavior and service, from lists of eligibles certified by the civil service commission as the result of competitive examinations.

Under this system, responsibility is centralized, politics eliminated, the spoils system rendered impossible.

From being a dirty, ill-governed, crime-ridden town, the Iowa capital has become one of the show-places of the middle West. The new civic center, formed by grouping public buildings on both sides of the Des Moines River, is widely regarded as the finest effect of the kind in any American city. That the handsomely boulevarded, generously parked, gorgeously lighted, well ordered place which Des Moines is to-day, could be developed in so short a time from the Des Moines of four years ago, is simply a wonder. If it could be brought to the realization of other cities, it would be certain to prove the most potent argument for the new system.

RESULTS IN CEDAR RAPIDS.

Another illustration is the experience of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, a town of about thirty-five thousand inhabitants, which reorganized its government under the commission plan simultaneously with Des Moines.

The former government had regularly spent more than its income; its warrants were commonly at a discount, compelling excessive prices for supplies. When heavy warrants were outstanding, and there was no cash to pay them, the city would fund them into bonds; and so a bonded debt of $712,000 existed when the new government took hold.

Immediately the city's business was put on a strictly cash basis. Warrants that had formerly sold at eighty-five cents jumped to par; the town began claiming the cash discount given by dealers. An inventory of city property was made, and, when all liabilities were deducted, it was found that the city had net values of $453,000.

When the new plan had been in operation for three years a new inventory was made. The three-year showing was that the city had—

Reduced taxes each year.

Spent more on public improvements in three years than in the preceding ten years.

Paid off $155,000 of its bonded debt.

Paid its bills every week, and regularly received the cash discounts.

Employed more men than ever before, and paid higher wages.

A good exhibit, this, for a town which had never even known before how it stood, except that year by year its general financial condition was a little worse than before!

From the beginning, the Des Moines plan attracted wide-spread attention. Its novelty made appeal to imagination. Believers in the theory that "the cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy," found justification of their faith. The whole country had been aroused to realization of the need for better government. Anything that made confident promise could get respectful hearing.

EVANGELISTS OF THE NEW GOSPEL.

So Des Moines and Cedar Rapids suddenly found themselves the cynosures of nation-wide attention. Middle-class cities all over the central West began studying and agitating the new plan. Leagues and clubs and committees were organized to urge it. Cedar Rapids and Des Moines, and other cities as they gained experience under the new system, were called upon for expert testimony; and this presently brought forward Ernest A. Sherman, of Cedar Rapids, and John MacVicar, of Des Moines, as traveling evangelists of the new gospel.

Sherman had been a newspaper publisher in Cedar Rapids. Under the old system, he had bitterly and persistently attacked the city council; and one day, when a vacancy occurred in that body, it played a grim joke on Sherman by electing him to fill the vacancy.

Sherman was game, and accepted. He said little and sawed wood till he learned how the council was organized. He found that a minority of vigorous men were running everything, and doing it badly.

He bided his time, talked to the inactive but honest councilmen, finally organized them under his own leadership, and one day, in a sensational fight, succeeded in defeating the old ring.

From that time on Sherman was the boss, and things began to improve. For this service the people elected him a commissioner when the commission plan was adopted.

Pretty soon demands were pouring in for speakers to explain the plan in other cities. Sherman became the chief expositor. He was in so much demand that at the end of his term he declined re-election, and placed himself at the disposal of the various State and local leagues, now fast springing up, to urge adoption of the new idea. For the last year he has campaigned under such auspices all over the country, even accepting invitations to assist in campaigns in Canadian cities.

At St. John, New Brunswick, Mr. Sherman found a remarkable exhibit. A few months ago he was called there to help explain the plan to the people, a campaign for its adoption being in progress. W. E. Anderson, secretary of the local board of trade, showed him a file of several hundred letters from cities all over the United States, where the plan was in operation. Sixty-seven cities were represented. The letters were from business men, professional men, publicists, journalists, who had been asked for frank expressions of opinion based on their cities' experience.

Every letter received declared that the plan had unqualifiedly succeeded, and recommended it to other cities.

A St. John publisher, leading the fight against the plan, sent his editor to Cedar Rapids and Des Moines to get materials with which to confound and confute the Sherman arguments. The editor came back converted to the plan!

St. John voted for a commission government.

These States now have laws under which cities may adopt the plan—Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Idaho, California, Iowa, Missouri, West Virginia, Louisiana, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Michigan, Washington, Montana, New Jersey, Massachusetts. At the time of writing, similar bills are pending in Connecticut, Indiana, and Pennsylvania.

In the Eastern campaigns for the commission plan, it is constantly urged that a system suited to the comparatively small cities of the West will not serve the purposes of the great municipalities of the East. A man in a New Jersey audience that I addressed on the subject protested that a little town of fifteen thousand or so, like Des Moines, could hardly enlighten the big Jersey communities. He was surprised when I explained that Des Moines is just outside the hundred-thousand class, and is straining toward that figure in expectation of reaching it in another five years.

The truth is that the plan works just as well in the biggest cities that have adopted it as in the smallest. Its benefits are rather more obvious, because government in a big town touches the people at more points.

I asked a student of municipal affairs in New York whether the plan would work there. He replied that the Board of Estimate and Apportionment corresponds very closely to the commission; it is in a large way the real governing body; but it is so hampered by the complexities of borough organizations, the board of aldermen, and other features which disintegrate responsibility, that it does not give the results that a pure commission government would. He declared that the Des Moines plan, unmodified in essentials, would, in his opinion, work as well in New York as in Des Moines, and vastly improve the administration of the American metropolis.

COMMISSION-GOVERNED CITIES.

Certain it is that the best authorities in such great cities as Buffalo and Pittsburgh have unreservedly committed themselves to the new plan. The latest available list of cities that have adopted it includes one hundred and twenty-two, in twenty-six States. With the populations of those having more than twenty-five thousand in 1910, they are:

Alabama—Montgomery (38,136) and Birmingham (132,685).

California—Berkeley (40,434), Modesto, Los Angeles (319,198), Riverside, San Diego (39,578), San Luis Obispo, Oakland (150,174).

Colorado—Colorado Springs (29,078), Grand Junction.

Idaho—Lewiston, Boise.

Illinois—Aurora (29,807), Carbondale, Moline, Rock Island, Springfield (51,678), Decatur (31,140), Dixon, Elgin (25,976), Ottawa, Kewanee.

Iowa—Des Moines (86,386), Cedar Rapids (32,811), Davenport (43,028), Burlington, Sioux City (47,828), Fort Dodge, Keokuk, Marshalltown.

Kansas—Kansas City (82,331), Coffeyville, Leavenworth, Wichita (52,450), Hutchinson, Abilene, Girard, Iola, Independence, Cherryvale, Newton, Marion, Neodesha, Topeka (43,684), Wellington, Parsons, Pittsburgh, Emporia, Anthony, Caldwell, Dodge City, Eureka.

Kentucky—Newport (30,309).

Louisiana—Shreveport (28,015).

Massachusetts—Lynn (89,336), Haverhill (44,115), Chelsea (32,452). A modified form of commission government also exists in Boston (670,585), Taunton (34,259), and Gloucester.

Michigan—Port Huron, Harbor Beach.

Mississippi—Clarksdale, Hattiesburg.

Minnesota—Mankato.

North Dakota—Mandan, Bismarck, Minot, Grand Forks, Fargo.

Missouri—St. Joseph (77,403).

New York—Mount Vernon (30,919).

New Mexico—Roswell.

North Carolina—High Point, Greenville, Charlotte.

Oklahoma—Ardmore, Bartlesville, Duncan, Enid, Miami, MacAlester, Muskogee (25,278), Purcell, Sapulpa, Tulsa, Guthrie, Wagner, Oklahoma City (69,205), Claremore.

Oregon—Baker City.

South Carolina—Columbia (26,319).

South Dakota—Dell Rapids, Huron, Pierre, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Yankton, Vermillion.

Tennessee—Memphis (131,105), Etowah, Bristol, Clarksville, Richard City.

Texas—Arkansas Pass, Austin (29,860), Beaumont, Corpus Christi, Dallas (92,104), Denison, Fort Worth (73,312), Galveston (36,981), Greenville, Houston (78,800), Kennedy, Lyford, Marble Falls, Marshal, Palestine, Port Lavaca, Sherman, Texarkana, Anthony.

Washington—Tacoma (83,743), Spokane (104,402).

Wisconsin—Eau Claire, Appleton.

West Virginia—Bluefield, Huntington (31,161), Parkersburg.

The list is by no means complete. The movement is spreading so fast that it is impossible to make a census of commission cities to-day, with any assurance that it will be useful a month hence. Georgia is in the throes of several campaigns; Montana's leading cities are all struggling with the question at the date of writing; New Jersey seems likely to add several names this year.

In connection with the list of commission-governed cities, here is a suggestive re-enforcement of the proposition that good government pays. There were in the United States just twenty-two cities of more than twenty-five thousand people that doubled their population between 1900 and 1910, according to the Federal census returns. Of these, no fewer than thirteen to-day have commission government. In all, there are forty commission-governed cities above twenty-five thousand; thirteen of them, as I have said, doubled their population in ten years. There are one hundred and eighty-eight non-commission-governed cities of the same class; only nine of them doubled.

With State and local leagues forming in all parts of the country to urge the new plan; with constantly increasing volume of educational work and literature placing the system before the people; with the commission plan able still to boast that it has recorded no failure, that no city after once adopting has ever abandoned it; with so many Legislatures passing statutes that authorize municipalities to adopt the commission system, there is every indication that the number of American cities governed by this plan will increase at a rapid rate, and that in another decade it will be recognized as the long-awaited solution of our problem of city government.

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